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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000005

SIPDIS
DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E
NAIROBI FOR SOMALIA UNIT

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [EWWT](#) [ETRD](#) [SO](#) [DJ](#) [ET](#)
SUBJECT: VISITING SOMALILAND FOREIGN MINISTER ON SECURITY, ASWJ, AND
BERBERA PORT

REF: 09 ADDIS ABABA 2285

CLASSIFIED BY: J. Swan, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. During a January 4 meeting with Ambassador, visiting Somaliland Foreign Minister Abdillahi Mohamed Duale stressed Somaliland's ongoing focus on security threats, including potentially heightened targeting from al-Shabaab during upcoming elections. Duale said that Somaliland was interested in increased information-sharing and other cooperation with Djibouti, Yemen, and Puntland. Duale said that Somaliland authorities were already offering "safe passage and advice" to Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ), and would be interested in further developing ties with ASWJ. On the economic front, Duale said that discussions with the French Bollore group to manage the port of Berbera were well advanced. END SUMMARY.

SECURITY: SHABAAB, ASWJ, AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

¶2. (C) Duale said Somaliland authorities remained extremely vigilant on security threats, and continued to seek greater cooperation and information-sharing with regional partners such as Djibouti, Yemen, and Puntland. On Yemen, Duale said that Somaliland shared U.S. concerns on the current security situation. Somaliland had for some time maintained representation in Sanaa via a "Trade Delegation" mission staffed by five or six officials. He intimated that current exchange of security information is quite limited. On Puntland, Duale told Ambassador that he had recently hosted a group of Puntland authorities for lunch in Addis Ababa, and had urged greater "seriousness" and more cooperation. Somaliland was concerned, he said, that corruption and insufficient control in Puntland meant that threat information shared with its authorities might end up in the wrong hands. Duale planned to stay several days in Djibouti, and told Ambassador that he had already had a long discussion with Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, and planned to meet with several other Djibouti ministers.

¶3. (C) Duale welcomed recent approaches between Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ). Some former Islamic Courts elements within the TFG, he noted, disagreed with ASWJ on certain questions of religious doctrine, and were therefore more hesitant on TFG-ASWJ rapprochement. Somaliland, Duale said, was already providing ASWJ with "security, safe passage, and advice," although not with material or financial support. Somaliland was favorable to

greater cooperation with ASWJ, which enjoyed widespread popular support. This support, Duale explained, was primarily based on religious legitimacy.

ELECTIONS: "CONFIDENT" IN COMMISSION

14. (C) On elections, Duale said that the Electoral Commission had full government support, and had also gained the confidence of the opposition parties. After the Electoral Commission sets a date, Duale said, the government would "not delay" in organizing elections. In light of al-Shabaab's repeated statements that Somaliland's constitutional state was an "anathema" to Islamic principles, Somalilanders were especially mindful of increased danger from al-Shabaab during elections, he noted.

FRENCH BOLLORE GROUP TO MANAGE BERBERA PORT-DJIBOUTI

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REPORTEDLY QUIET ON ETHIOPIAN PORT DIVERSIFICATION

15. (C) Somaliland and Ethiopia were now well advanced in discussions with the French Bollore Group on management of the port of Berbera, Duale said (reftel). Ethiopia had agreed to finance road improvements for the Addis Ababa-Berbera route up to and even slightly beyond the Ethiopia-Somaliland border, Duale said. Somaliland would then seek international aid to improve the remaining road section. Duale said that French Ambassador to Ethiopia Jean-Christophe Belliard had played key role in negotiations, and had personally travelled to and across the road link at the Somaliland-Ethiopia border.

16. (C) Duale reported that Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi had telephoned Djiboutian President Guelleh to discuss the impending Bollore deal. President Guelleh, Duale said, had reportedly raised no major objections to the plan. (COMMENT. Djibouti's economy is heavily dependent on its Dubai Ports World-managed port, which derives some 85 percent of its business from traffic to and from Ethiopia. Greater Ethiopian use of an improved port at Berbera would therefore represent a potential economic threat to Djibouti. If President Guelleh indeed raised no objections to the Bollore deal, this may signify that Djibouti is confident enough in its port's competitive advantage, hopeful that transshipment business will pick up to replace any lost bilateral trade, and perhaps even mindful that Djibouti might indirectly benefit from the attractiveness to shipping lines of an additional improved port in the region. Conversely, Djibouti's reported non-opposition may merely represent an acknowledgement of the GODJ's powerlessness to block such a deal. END COMMENT.)

17. (C) In contrast to the Bollore Group's serious interest, Duale said he had been dismayed to hear rumors that Total was considering pulling out of its Somaliland-based fuel farm business. Total had invested in Somaliland early and at considerable risk, he noted, and would be foolish to abandon ship now.

COMMENT

18. (C) Djibouti and Somaliland-which share significant linguistic and clan ties-have a history of on-again-off-again relations. While a resurgent port at Berbera may represent a threat to Djiboutian economic interests, the GODJ is well aware that Somaliland's relative stability has long provided Djibouti with an important security buffer. Djibouti and Somaliland are currently enjoying a warming period in bilateral relations, and-especially in light of increased threats from al-Shabaab-are likely to continue and intensify cooperation on security issues. END COMMENT.
SWAN